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ABSTRACT

Surveys of the literature in initial teacher preparation identify points of discontinuity, or "gaps," in such programs. Five gaps are discussed briefly with reference to the literature for Canada: (1) between theory and practice; (2) between students' expectations and classroom realities; (3) between university students' study/work habits and unexpected behavioral patterns of a professional; (4) between university faculty and classroom teachers' behavior repertoires; and (5) between school divisions (elementary and secondary). Questions for further examination of each gap are raised. Features of a secondary teacher preparation program aimed at reaching across these five points of discontinuity are described. Associated theoretical questions are identified, and these, along with practical problems tied to the program context are raised for discussion. (Author/MJB)

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REACHING ACROSS DISCONTINUITIES IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER PREPARATION

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Public opinion across Canada (and across North America) is that schools are failing the nation's children and youth. In the 1960 decade it was failure to make them into "humane" beings because the public school was too rigid, too bureaucratic, too systems-managed. Teachers were too dogmatic, insensitive to their students' needs and peculiarities, more concerned with the curriculum than with the learner. They were not helping to develop the whole child. Among the proposed solutions for increased effectiveness of schooling was the alternative school, which, free of bureaucratic controls, could more readily provide the optimum environment in which a child could develop into a sensitive, creative and responsible person with help from the teacher-facilitator.

In the 1970 decade the public still holds that schools are failing. Among the graduates of high schools are those whom universities, industry, public opinion say cannot read, cannot write, cannot compute at an expected Grade 12 level. The proposed solution to this failure is back-to-the-basics and better preparation of teachers. As alcoholism and vandalism increase among school-aged youth, questions are being asked about the ascendancy of individualism over social norms in the classroom. Should the school be teaching values is no longer a moot for debate. Rather the questions are: What values should be taught? How can the schools teach them? Are teachers being prepared to teach values? Again implications for teacher preparation.

Whatever the causes cited for the failure of schools,

teachers receive a fair share of the blame. Whatever the remedies proposed, better teacher preparation remains a part. The public articulates this need, more loudly during peak times of schooling criticisms and teacher oversupply. Teachers tend to share this perception generally, and at all times, as the professional voice in Ontario relates, "The one thing that all Ontario teachers have in common is the sense that their preparation for entering this profession was something less than perfect" (Interaction, 1975, p.4).

Such general dissatisfaction with teacher training, is not new, nor is it peculiar to teachers in Ontario. Wilson's research (1972) among teachers in Jamaica revealed their feelings of inadequacies with respect to their professional preparation. Most of the U.S. studies have found that teacher education has little positive impact on the aspiring teacher and may even have some noxious effects (Day, 1959) leaving the young teacher feeling more confused and disoriented than when he began his training program. Taylor (1975) has shown that teachers' concern about their readiness for teaching increases in scope and intensity with movement towards the end of the training period, and furthermore such findings support that of earlier work by Fuller (1969). The general conclusion of work done at the University of Western Ontario (Sanders et al, 1972) is that "student dissatisfaction and discontent are nearly endemic to teacher preparation programs and not just isolated phenomena attributable to individual cases of maladjustment."

What is the source and nature of such widespread dissatisfaction that persists, even when the empirical evidence indicates that teachers today are better qualified for their job? Perhaps it lays in this little episode related by a retired teacher. A few years ago a friend and colleague of mine, an excellent woodwork teacher was accepted at the local Teachers' College for a Year's course in general crafts. I had an angry letter from him asking me to come visit with him. When I arrived he took me on a tour of the College, a lovely campus but rather old-fashioned in spots. Over a stream that flowed through the grounds was a wooden bridge. It was broken. Further along was a decaying rookery which still managed to attract birds. About at this point, my friend exploded 'Do you know what we do here? Making fidgety bureaus and chest of drawers. Why are we not fixing that bridge? Why aren't we repairing the birds' house? Don't you think we'd learn more and get more satisfaction from doing these things? That young man was concerned about the "connectedness" in his education and this seems to be at the root of teachers' dissatisfaction with the preparation they receive for the job.

When student teachers and first year teachers enter the field they see and feel very little connection between the existential job demands and what they learned in college. Invariably they assess their practice teaching experiences as the most valuable aspect of their professional education program. Two other factors that contribute to particularly

the student teachers' feelings of isolation are these: In a consecutive program the average student has completed his baccalaureate, but is still a University student. He tries to hold on to that identity but the field oriented nature of the program often takes him away from campus so he looses contact with his/her Univeristy colleagues. Reports from student teachers who live in campus residence relate the difference that comes about in life style between them and their University friends because of the new job demands.

2. Lack of work experience (almost any long term kind) seems to be reflected in almost a naivéte (sometimes fear) in entering several aspects of the teacher training program. Differences in perspective and attitude between students with and without work experience can be observed in a consecutive program which allows for admission of qualified people from other professional and vocational fields. Unstructured interviews with students at Brock College of Education have shown that the older students who enter teaching from another profession or job tend to:

a. be more curious than blasé about the preparation program
b. establish interrelationships among various experiences in the program more quickly
c. accept tentativness and seeming anomalies with more patience
d. approach the field experiences less fearfully
e. are less terrified by the prospects of job interviews
f. have more realistic expectations of their year -in-training.

3. New graduates with a three or four year degree do not perceive any relationship between what they studied in their first degree-program and what they do in teacher training while they are in the College of Education. Research evidence shows that only after a few years of teaching are relationships established. Such contributes strongly to the feeling of isolation and frustration with often negative assessment of the worthiness of the teacher training program. Teachers in training feel these gaps even if they cannot explain them. An attempt, by three students in the program at Brock, to isolate, describe and suggest remedy for these gaps, recorded these concluding statements, "In conclusion...we submit that, as this assignment came to a close, we found ourselves more confused than at the outset. There seems to be weaknesses in the structure of most College of Education programs. The role identification problem that faces students seems to be the basis of all criticisms. The practical application of theory is lacking. Core courses do not lend themselves to the necessary 'basics' of teaching. There is an evident lack of alternatives for students, but the desires and wishes of three hundred students cannot be met all the time" (Savage, 1976)

From students from other Faculties of Education in Ontario come such comments as, "Too much time was spent dilly-dallying around doing busy work assignments" (Incidentally this seems to be the typical reaction towards learning activities intended to convey an awareness of the place and nature of classroom routines. Experienced teachers recognize routines as essential to teaching; novices view them as busy work, intellectually

trivial. In many cases only after lessons have failed miserably do these novices begin to appreciate the usefulness of such "unnecessary stuff". The honours graduate, fresh from a fourth year University geography course does not see immediately the challenge of selecting and translating his subject matter so that a Grade 10 student may understand. For him Grade 10 curriculum content is lacking in academic rigour, hence intellectually trivial and he sees himself as "putting in time rather than learning." (Sanders)

Thus far, the analysis of recorded and observation data collected from student teachers and other observers of the teacher preparation undertaking has suggested that indeed a disconnectedness is perceived, felt and experienced. This may be described as gaps, of which five will be mentioned and commented on briefly.

1. Gap between theory and practice

This gap is mentioned as a point of disconnection so widely and so often, that it has become a cliche, and cliches tend not to be analysed for their substance, nor their validity. The expectation of a teacher training programme is that it teaches teachers to teach. Given that teaching is perceived, generally, as a set of tasks to be done, attempts to introduce thinking and analysing activities that do not have obvious correspondence to doing activities are seen as theory. Hence a course in Philosophy of Education, or Psychology of Education is theory; but a course in Teaching Methods or Practice Teaching is seen as practice and that is what is really important. Such a curricular organization in teacher preparation programs conforms

to the traditional paradigm (Browne) and serves to reinforce the observation to which we speak. We hope to show later a departure from this tradition.

WHAT ARE THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH STUDENTS THINK OF "THEORY" AND "PRACTICE"?

ARE THERE PROGRAM MODELS THAT DEPART FROM THE TRADITIONAL PARADIGM WITH THE RESULT OF A PERCEIVED DECREASE IN THIS GAP?

Research done among engineers has revealed a similar stance, but also shows that as they grow in the profession they begin to see more meaning in what was perceived earlier as "theory" courses. (McLeish)

COULD THIS BE TRUE ALSO OF TEACHERS?

2. Gap between Students' Expectations and Classroom Realities

Little systematic evidence exists to demonstrate how wide is the difference in this respect and what are the consequences thereof on the students' behaviour. Some direct student comments and less direct data serve to suggest that this may be a critical issue. The film "The Teacher" released only recently by OECA (Channel 19, May 8, 1978) shows a student teacher's reactions of wonder and frustration as she moved into and through different classrooms. Some left her wanting to continue; some left her convinced that she would never learn to manage in a classroom. In an attempt at one of Ontario's Colleges of Education to determine the expectations of students

when they entered the program, the vast majority of students indicated they expected to have confidence and competence as a teacher by the end of the year. (Savage)

IS THIS A REALISTIC OR IDEALISTIC EXPECTATION?

Others said, they just hoped for a job. Some, in their zeal to do well, to see an enduring dream fulfilled, expect to be in command of the classroom situation during the first week. When this does not happen, surprise, disappointment, frustration result.

A discrepancy between what teacher educators say and what they do does exist and is quickly recognized by students, as unacceptable and sometimes as incompetence. Philip Jackson, in speaking to this concern, has said:

> The dissonance between what teachers say, or at least what their leaders say, and what they do takes many forms and has several important consequences. For some it lays the groundwork for the development of a cynical outlook toward the admonitions of idealists and the advocates of new and supposedly revolutionary practices. This cynicism, which grows out of a prior sense of disillusionment, strikes many young teachers as they begin to appreciate the unrealistic quality of several of the expectations aroused during the period of their professional training. Teaching as actually experienced and as described in textbooks and college courses often turns out to be two quite different states of affairs.

A primary methods instructor, when challenged by a number of her students on this point, asked if they would like to be treated like Grade 1 children? To illustrate her point, she even used the language of a Grade 1 teacher in her seminars. She was repeatedly ridiculed by the students when they met in the student lounge and reflected on their experiences. Their favourite description of their instructor, "Miss _____

knows her stuff; but she treats us like little kids. She doesn't seem to realize that she is teaching University, not Grade 13 graduates."

An infrequently noted area of dissonance is that of the program demands. By far the majority of University graduates enter the teacher training program convinced (by rumour) that this will be a "breeze", a walk-through. They express surprise when they find they are actually expected to work and they remain awake until 2 and 3 a.m. doing assignments! Usually they are awake these hours preparing for teaching.

Differences between associate teachers' performance are viewed negatively and students expect to find all their supervisors in the field (as well as in the college) working always at a similar superior level of performance, even after they themselves criticize the system for not allowing for individuality but instead reinforcing conformity. In the words of a student, "my first practice teaching session brought my fine idealism down to earth with a crash" (Sanders)
CONSIDERING HOW LONG IT TAKES TO CHANGE ATTITUDES, IS IT REASONABLE TO ANTICIPATE CLOSING OF THIS GAP DURING A SHORT NINE MONTH PROGRAM?

IS THIS GAP NARROWER AMONG STUDENTS IN A CONCURRENT THAN IN A CONSECUTIVE PROGRAM?

ARE THERE SOME MODIFICATION STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE USED TO ALIGN EXPECTATIONS CLOSER WITH REALITY?

3. Gap between Roles

During training and even during the first two years of teaching the young teacher straddles two demanding roles, that of student and that of teacher. Perhaps however this disjunction is most pronounced during the preparation year when the organizational nature of most programs demand that the student shifts roles at a very fast pace. It has been observed that students coming into a consecutive program from the work world make these adaptations more easily than those entering the program directly from University. Some comments on this point have been discussed earlier. In the classroom this role ambiguity is focussed and tends to be played out in uncertain attempts at familiarity with both supervisors and pupils. The unexpressed questions seem to be:

WHEN AM I A COLLEAGUE WITH MY ASSOCIATE TEACHER?

WHEN AM I HIS/HER STUDENT?

I KNOW I AM SUPPOSED TO BE THE PUPIL'S TEACHER BUT WHEN AM I HIS/HER FRIEND?

This last question seems to plague the secondary more than the elementary teacher.

4. Gap between Role Models

For the teacher-in-training both college and school teachers serve as role models. Differences in their behaviour are inevitable. Students tend to interpret these differences

similarly to how they interpret differences between associate teachers, in terms of competence and loyalty, usually establishing a hierarchy for judging the differences they see.

Both the school and the college are heavy stakeholders in the teacher education enterprise and so hold strong opinions about the oughts of the business. Minimal dialogue between these two stakeholders widens the gap under discussion and results in increasing the students' anxiety and frustration.
HOW DOES THE STUDENT TEACHER RESPOND WHEN HE SITS IN THE STAFF ROOM AND HEARS THE TEACHERS CRITICIZE (USUALLY TEAR APART) AN INDIVIDUAL IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION OR ITS PROGRAM?

WHAT DOES THE YOUNG TEACHER (STUDENT OR PROBATIONARY) DO WHEN HER SUPERVISOR GREETS HER THUS "THIS IS THE REAL WORLD; NOW YOU CAN FORGET ALL THAT YOU LEARNED ON TOP OF THE HILL?" REMEMBER THAT AS YET SHE HAS VERY LITTLE ELSE TO HOLD ON TO.

WHAT DOES THE STUDENT TEACHER DO WHEN HIS ASSOCIATE ASKS HIM TO BE IN SCHOOL ON FRIDAY MORNING AND HE IS DUE IN A CLASS IN THE COLLEGE THEN?

5. Gap between School Panels

This area of discontinuity might be one peculiar to the Ontario education system. Traditionally, teachers for elementary and secondary schools have been prepared in separate institutions, have had (until 1971) different academic preparation, upon entering teaching belong to different professional organizations. They have not been accustomed to

meeting.

In Ontario there are two current thrusts that seem to suggest it is time to ask some questions about this tradition. The curricular thrust for a K - Grade 13 continuum indicates a concern about spiral structuring of curriculum. The advent of the O.T.C. (Ontario Teacher's Certificate) begs the assumption of a core of teaching skills that obtain irrespective of the school division in which the teacher works. Even without these two thrusts that would seem to encourage a closer co-operation between the two areas of elementary and secondary, it would seem tnat sound learning principles demand that secondary teachers become familiar with the nature of the learner whom they inherit and the nature of the curricular experiences these learners have had before entering Grade 9. IS IT PEDAGOGICAL SENSE TO EXPECT THAT HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ESPECIALLY THOSE IN GRADES 9 AND 10 SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS TO WHICH THEIR STUDENTS HAVE BEEN EXPOSED BEFORE ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL?

DOES THE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS RESPECT?

ARE THERE FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND SKILLS COMMON TO TEACHING REGARDLESS OF THE LEVEL AT WHICH TEACHING IS DONE?

Towards Establishing Connections

Thus far five gaps have been identified and described. Questions to further elucidate the nature of each gap have been raised.

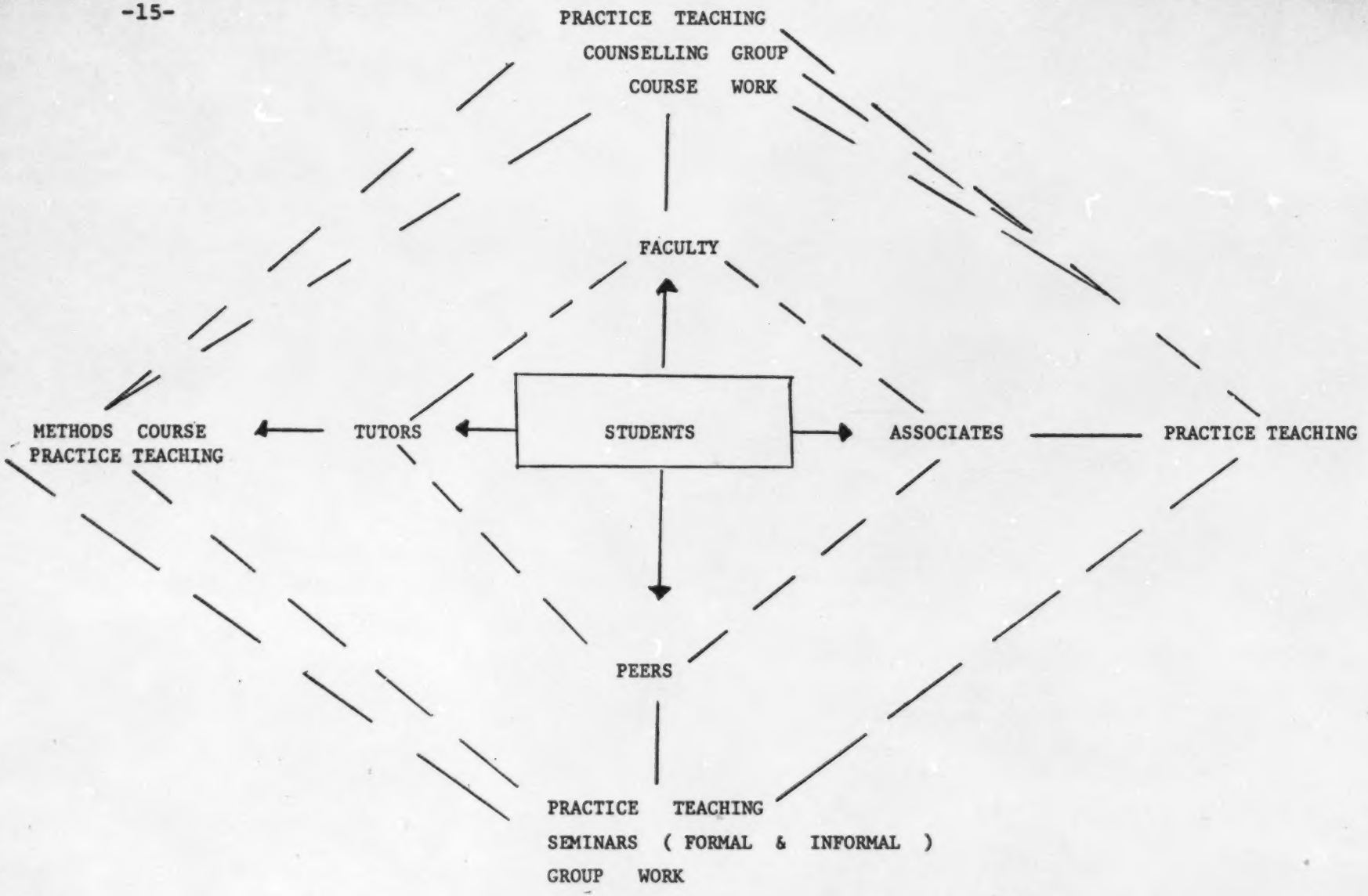
HOW MAY THESE GAPS BE MINIMISED?

The model illustrated herein operates on these assumptions:

1. In addition to specialized skills there are sets of teaching skills that are generalizable across school divisions and across subject matter.
2. There is some similarity in teacher attitudes between elementary and secondary teachers.
3. The principle of continuity in learning must be observed in a teacher education curriculum.
4. Involvement of and collaboration with a variety of professionals in teaching will contribute to minimising the gaps identified.
5. The greater the interface between in-college and in-school work, the greater the opportunities for testing theory against reality and vice versa; hence the model departs from the traditional paradigm in these respects:

    1. Elementary and secondary teachers are in the same [illegible] instructional units in a number of courses. However provision is made for teaching in areas of specialization (e.g. subject tutorials)
    2. In addition to associate teachers from the field, students work with tutors in the field in part of their course work.
    3. Occasionally (could be more frequently) these tutors are invited to particpate in in-college seminars with the students.

4. Students for secondary teaching certificates are required to have curriculum and teaching experiences in elementary schools (usually Grades 7 and 8). The reverse relationship is also encouraged.
5. Opportunities are provided for students to have learning experiences across panels (e.g. in counselling groups, in teaching centres, in core course seminars) and also subject areas (e.g. in Curriculum seminar).
6. Throughout the year infield experiences are scheduled so as to alternate with in-college experiences.



A TEACHER PREPARATION MODEL FOR SYNTHESIS

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